



## **Not on government's tab**

Editorial  
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Not the government's job. The Federal Aviation Administration has some new rules aimed at preventing a repeat of a partisan coup of federal air-safety workers that Texas Republicans engineered in May.

An inspector general's report found that at least 13 FAA employees were shanghaied over an eight-hour stretch, at taxpayer expense, in an unwarranted search for the private plane of a Texas Democratic lawmaker.

At the time, the Texas Legislature was tied in knots over a GOP congressional redistricting plan. Of course, all sides knew the Democratic state senators weren't lost; they'd intentionally fled the Capitol to prevent a vote.

Republican honchos in Texas commandeered state police and narcotics officers to chase the Democrats. And their ally in Washington, House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, R-Texas, manipulated the FAA into joining the hunt. All the while, the plane was safely on the ground in Ardmore, Okla.

The FAA announced Tuesday that employees now are under orders not to reveal the whereabouts of a plane unless the request has an official government purpose such as flight safety or efficiency or is part of a bona fide law enforcement investigation.

Seems that should have been obvious -- even in the heat of a partisan political battle.

Not the government's problem. In another wise move that protects taxpayers' pocketbooks, Bill and Hillary Clinton have been slapped down in their latest effort to get taxpayers to help pay their legal bills.

On Tuesday, a federal court panel denied all but \$85,000 of the Clintons' request for reimbursement of their \$3.6 million in defense costs for the Whitewater investigation.

The 1994 probe was started to look into financial shenanigans surrounding a failed Arkansas land-development scheme. But it moved from the Clintons' investment misjudgments to virtually any other dirt their political enemies could dig up.

In 2000, the independent counsel found insufficient evidence for criminal charges against the Clintons, though four friends and political associates went to jail.

By law, exonerated targets of independent counsel investigations could have their legal fees paid. But with so many allegations surrounding the Clintons' Whitewater dealings, the court ruled that they would have incurred defense costs even without any independent counsel probe.

Given the questionable conduct that defined Whitewater, that, too, should have been obvious -- even when it touched off a partisan political donnybrook.

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